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STATE FOR WHA/CAR, DRL, S/CRS, INR/IAA

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: MICHELE PIERRE-LOUIS: PREVAL'S THIRD PRIME
MINISTER DESIGNEE

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 865

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary -----

¶1. (C) Two weeks after Parliament's rejection of Robert Manuel, President Preval on June 23 announced his third Prime Minister designee, Michele Duvivier Pierre-Louis. As was the case with his previous two nominees, Pierre-Louis is a close personal associate of Preval. She is a former business partner of the President, heads a well-regarded local NGO funded by the Soros Foundation, was trained in the U.S. as an economist, and has worked for many years in democracy and development, but has almost no political experience. Despite respect across broad sectors of Haitian society for Pierre-Louis' accomplishments, her support in parliament and prospects for ratification there are uncertain. In contrast to the two previous PM candidates, Pierre-Louis is taking the position that her initial confirmation is a technical exercise of satisfying constitutional eligibility requirements for this office, and leaving it to emissaries to lobby parliamentarians under the radar. If confirmed by Parliament, Pierre-Louis will be the second female Haitian Prime Minister after Claudette Werleigh, who served under former president Jean Bertrand Aristide 1995-1996. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On June 23, President Preval formally announced Michele Duvivier Pierre-Louis as his third designee for Prime Minister. Pierre-Louis' nomination follows the failure of Preval's previous two nominees to pass ratification before the Chamber of Deputies (reftel). Preval's announcement followed consultations with the Presidents of both chambers of Parliament as mandated by the Haitian Constitution. Well respected by different sectors of Haitian society for her democracy building and development work within Haiti, Pierre-Louis has no political party affiliation.

The Next Steps -----

¶3. (U) Both houses of Parliament must now form commissions to study Pierre-Louis' constitutional eligibility, based on documents she submits regarding her citizenship, property ownership, and legal residency. Following Robert Manuel's rejection in the Chamber of Deputies, Pierre-Louis was widely

speculated to be the frontrunner for the job, with previous potential nominees such as Minister of Planning Jean-Max Bellrive and Secretary of State for Agriculture Joanas Gue hardly mentioned. If she is confirmed, she will put together a cabinet and submit it and a formal declaration of her government's policy to the parliament for a vote of confidence. A no vote at that point means that the entire process must begin anew.

14. (U) Senate President Kely Bastien (Lespwa, North) told reporters June 23 that most senators are amenable to Pierre-Louis' candidacy, and noted that she has a strong grounding in Haiti's socio-economic reality. Deputy F. Lucas Sainvil (Lespwa, Port de Paix/Northwest), coordinator of the current majority bloc in the Chamber of Deputies known as the Cooperative of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP), stated June 24 that his bloc would support Pierre-Louis provided her documentation established her constitutional qualification for the position. Senator Jean-Hector Anacasis (Lespwa, West) however, publicly expressed doubts about her ability to solve the problem confronting Haiti such as inflation, security, and corruption, and suggested she does not realize the magnitude of the responsibility she will face

15. (C) Michele Pierre-Louis told the Ambassador June 25 that through personal "emissaries," she had already contacted the presidents of the two chambers of the legislature, who are supportive, and caretaker Prime Minister Alexis, to urge him to act responsibly in her confirmation process. (Note: This implies she believes that Alexis played a role in the Chamber of Deputies' rejection of the two previous PM candidates. End note) Pierre-Louis also said that she planned to reach out, through "emissaries," to all members of parliament.

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Comment

16. (SBU) Pierre-Louis is Preval's third Prime Ministerial candidate in two months. Embassy senses a widespread hope in various sectors of Haitian society that Preval's third choice will pass parliamentary muster and fill the governance void brought on by the Senate's April 12 ouster of PM Jacques Edouard Alexis. Preval approached this third nomination process differently, circulating Pierre-Louis' name informally and taking a measure of public and parliamentary support before formally notifying the Senate and Chamber presidents of his choice. Pierre-Louis is likewise taking a different tack in the initial confirmation process. After the two previous PM nominations came to grief over legislators' demands for pork-barrel projects and cabinet positions, Pierre-Louis for now is avoiding engaging them directly. She is thus taking parliamentarians at their word that the initial confirmation process is exclusively about documenting her constitutional eligibility. It is an open question whether the Chamber of Deputies, the more unruly and openly venal of the two houses of the legislature, will confirm her based solely on her legal eligibility, and hold off on their political demands until the subsequent vote of confidence in the PM and her cabinet. End comment.

Bio Data

17. (U) Pierre-Louis was born in Jeremie (Southwest Department) in 1947. A trained economist, she is the current Executive Director of FOKAL (Fondation Connaissance et Liberte/Foundation for Knowledge and Liberty), an independent cultural and educational organization with funding from the Open Society Institute. Part of Preval's inner circle, Pierre-Louis and Preval jointly owning a bakery before Preval became Prime Minister in 1991. Beginning in 1991, she served as an advisor to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, managing the restructuring of all state agencies, liaising between the presidency and the ministries, and coordinating

agrarian reform projects with grass roots organizations. Pierre-Louis publicly supported Preval during his 2006 presidential bid. Preval rewarded by offering her the Minister of Culture position, which she declined. In 2006 the GOH awarded her the National Living Treasure Award, and in 2007 her leadership skills earned her a Trailblazer Award from Dialogue on Diversity, a U.S. organization. FOKAL was recognized in a symposium at the Library of Congress earlier this month. Pierre-Louis has authored several books on Haitian life and has been a literary critic for the Haitian-Caribbean Review ''Chemins Critiques'' since 1989. Pierre-Louis holds a masters' degree in economics from Queens College of the City University of New York. She has one daughter and is separated from husband Edouard Pierre-Louis. She speaks French, Creole and English, as well as some Spanish.

18. (C) Michele Pierre-Louis is separated from her husband with whom she has a daughter. Pierre-Louis is currently in a long-term relationship with another woman, a fact known to some but not widely discussed. Homosexuality is not a taboo subject in Haiti, but neither is it a topic of public or political discourse. Hence, Embassy cannot predict whether or how this may impact Pierre-Louis' confirmation process.
SANDERSON